

6th Sunday of Easter

Sunday 17th May 2020

Alleluia, Christ is risen!



Alleluia!

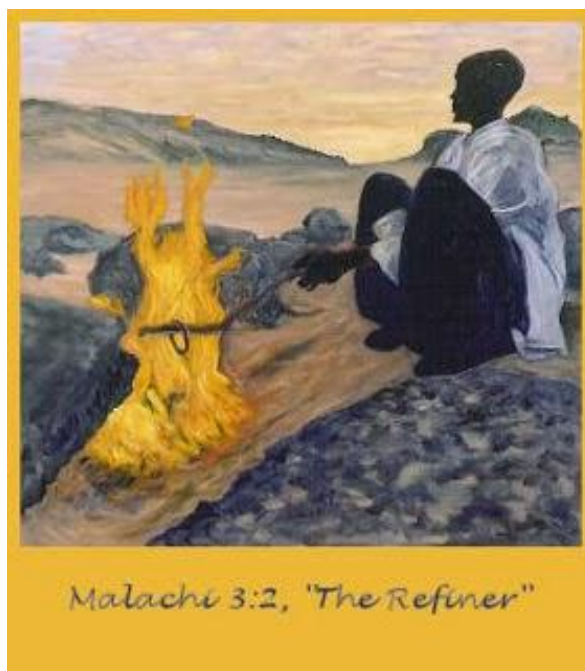
The Collect for the 6th Sunday of Easter

God our redeemer,
you have delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us
to eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Psalm 66: 7-end

7 Bless our God, O you peoples;
make the voice of his praise to be heard,
8 Who holds our souls in life
and suffers not our feet to slip.
9 For you, O God, have proved us;
you have tried us as silver is tried.
10 You brought us into the snare;

you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.
11 You let enemies ride over our heads;
we went through fire and water;
but you brought us out into a place of liberty.
12 I will come into your house with burnt offerings
and will pay you my vows,
which my lips uttered
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
13 I will offer you fat burnt sacrifices
with the smoke of rams;
I will sacrifice oxen and goats.
14 Come and listen, all you who fear God,
and I will tell you what he has done for my soul.
15 I called out to him with my mouth
and his praise was on my tongue.
16 If I had nursed evil in my heart,
the Lord would not have heard me,
17 But in truth God has heard me;
he has heeded the voice of my prayer.
18 Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer,
nor withheld his loving mercy from me.



Acts 17: 22-32 Paul in Athens

22 Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, ‘Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. 23For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, “To an unknown god.” What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, 25nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. 26From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, 27so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. 28For “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said,

“For we too are his offspring.”

29Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals.

30While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.’ 32 When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, ‘We will hear you again about this.’



Reflection from Revd Helen:

Over these past unprecedented and challenging weeks, I wonder if you have ever felt like the Psalmist in today's Psalm who has been through very difficult times, pushed to the limit, passed like silver through refining fires? But God brought his people through the "fire and water" and out into "a place of liberty" (Psa.66: 11). *The Message* version of this Psalm translates the last verses in this way: "*But he most surely did listen, he came on the double when he heard my prayer. Blessed be God: he didn't turn a deaf ear, he stayed with me, loyal in his love*". God is with us when we endure "fire and water" and He promises to bring us to a place of abundance. I believe too that God can use difficult times to train us, like silver being refined in the fire.

The Psalmist celebrates what God has done and urges praise to God in a way that everyone can hear (Psa.66:7). This prompts me to reflect on how willing we might be to tell others how our faith helps us in times of trial. Our world desperately needs good news. Jesus, his death and resurrection *are* good news – good news that is relevant today to people of all ages, in all situations and in all cultures. Today's reading from *Acts* is a beautiful example of how the apostle Paul shares the good news by talking to people on their level – introducing the good news of Jesus to people just as they are. Rather than criticising the Athenians for idolatry, Paul uses their worship of the unknown god as a way of explaining Jesus to them. He even uses in his preaching quotes from their own Greek poets (verse 28). Paul's message culminates in the life-changing news of the resurrection of Jesus (verse 31).

The Athenians' reaction to the good news of Jesus is similar to the response we might expect to receive today – some scoffed while others were interested (verse 32). Perhaps we lack boldness in sharing our faith because we fear being mocked or rejected. Perhaps too we form opinions about people and judge that they would not be interested anyway, so why risk humiliation or criticism? And yet a recent survey suggests that one in 20 adults who had not prayed previously have now started to pray during the lockdown. A similar number who had never attended a church service before said that they had now watched or listened to a religious service. Our world is hungry for spiritual food. We only have to look around us in our own culture. I recently saw an

advert for a range of skincare products that can “transform” life and “instil wisdom”. Product names included “renewed hope in a jar”, “time in a bottle”, “miracle worker”, “purity made simple”, “unconditional love” and “pure grace”. I was saddened at the thought of people being enticed by these “unknown gods” when all needs are met in the Risen Jesus.

The resurrection of Jesus transforms lives and changes everything. There may be times currently when we feel as if we are passing through fire and water but He is with us by His Spirit. As needy people look for solace in things that we might refer to metaphorically as “unknown gods”, let us be like the psalmist and be bold in telling others what Jesus has done and continues to do for us. Our world really does need to hear the good news.

Revd Helen

News item



Many of you will by now have heard the announcement that the Rt. Revd. Mark Tanner, currently Bishop of Berwick in Northumberland, is to be our next Bishop of Chester. Bishop Mark was ordained in Chester Diocese where he served his curacy in Upton on the Wirral. His two children were also born in the Diocese. Do remember Bishop Mark and his wife Lindsey (who is a licensed Reader in the Church of England) and their family as they prepare to come to our diocese.

***With greetings to you all from
The Rector and Revd Helen***

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